

768. *Sialia currucoides*—Mountain Blubird.

Reported as occasional summer visitant in western Kansas, but no migration data are at hand for this species.

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THE BALD EAGLE IN LOUISIANA.

BY ALFRED M. BAILEY.

The Bald Eagle is a not uncommon bird in Louisiana and it may be met in all parts of the state, although found most commonly near bodies of water. These large, beautiful birds of prey are striking features of the Southern swamps and marshes, and they are often seen skimming comparatively low as they search for food, and their strange, wild call can be heard for great distances, even when the bird is itself invisible. They will sail so high as to be almost indistinguishable from vultures, and yet that piercing cry is plainly audible.

The habit of the Bald Eagle to waylay the hard working Osprey is well known, but the eagle often fishes for himself, although not nearly so skillfully as his smaller relative. They work the beach systematically for dead fish, and a pair of birds almost always is to be found where fishermen are accustomed to seine. But a straight fish diet does not appeal to this old patriarch, and he will often

drop like a bullet into a flock of unsuspecting ducks, and ducks are not the only birds that sometimes make life worth living either.

I have examined four nests of the eagle in Louisiana, three on the estate of E. A. McIlhenny, the well known conservationist. The first nest was found February 17, 1917. There is a peninsula of cypress trees jutting into the marshland about a mile back in the dense swamps surrounding Avery Island, and the eagles had chosen the snag of a very high tree, that would give them a range of view. The half rotten tree had a portion of the top broken off, and leaned at quite an angle, so as to be an aid in climbing. I used iron pegs, and drove in as I climbed. In this nest was one young only, a bird almost full grown, and weighing in fact, as much as an adult. It was one of the characteristic uniform brown plumage of the juvenile. The nest itself was nearly six feet across, a massive affair of small cypress limbs two and three feet in length; moss and marsh grass were used for lining, and the whole interior was a mass of filth. Bits of rabbit fur, feathers from pintail and mallard ducks, and numerous bird bones, including the leg bone of a Great Blue Heron, cluttered up the nest.

The adults were not at all ferocious, but after a few preliminary circles, sailed off and watched me from a distant outstretched limb. They are exceedingly wary and usually occupy such an exposed position, where they can see and be seen from afar.

The second nest was found within a few hundred yards of the first, on February 2, 1919. Eagles seem to nest in the same locality for many years, and one pair that I know of, occupied the same general nesting site for seventeen successive years. In this nest were two eggs, one in advanced state of incubation, while the other was spoiled. One bird only was seen, the bird on the nest, and she flushed before we were within two hundred yards. She made a few circles and then disappeared, not to be seen

until we left the vicinity, when she called our attention by her strange cries.

The third nest was found the same day, three miles farther in the swamp. It was in an especially high cypress with no side branches below the nest. Young birds could be heard plainly from a good distance, and their little round heads could be seen above the black rim. Neither adult was present when we arrived, and as the young were desired for museum specimens, the tree was cut. One of the old birds appeared in a short time trailing a long piece of moss in her talons, which gave her tail a long pointed appearance. This bird, too, refused to approach close to the nest. Their sharp eyesight is uncanny, and although we desired to collect the pair, we were never able to get them within range. In the last nest, besides the usual clutter of feathers and bones, we were surprised to find a nest of hornets.

Eagles, as is usual with large predacious birds, do not nest in close proximity to each other. On Pecan Island I have been told of seven nests on one ridge, and that is the largest number I have heard of,—and can not verify that report. Usually there is only one to many miles of territory. It would be supposed that such a bulky nest would be very conspicuous, especially as the cypresses are not leaved out during the nesting season, but the masses of waving moss that festoon all the trees and the dense growth of underbrush effectively conceal this aerial home from casual observers.

Nesting material is gathered from the ground, and some small pieces were nicely cut as though from the blow of a hatchet. An old trapper told me of an interesting experience with these noble birds. He was resting under a tall cypress after a hard trip over the trap line, and he was attracted by the birds sailing overhead. One of them came to his tree, hovered above with a few strong strokes of its powerful wings, and then dropped like a plummet for a distance of about twenty-five feet upon a small out-

stretched limb. The limb snapped close, and quickly recovering itself, the bird sailed away with the branch.

March 4 I found another nest along Black Bayou in Cameron Parish. It was in a small cypress standing almost isolated in the marsh, a very conspicuous nesting site. One baby, only a few days old, and an egg pipped but with the young dead were in the nest at this late date. This nest was the most easily accessible of any found, but the region itself was far from the ordinary path of man. Several duck wings as well as fish (horned pout and shad) littered the nest, and the little fellow huddled off in one corner was almost lost among the debris.

Eagles are not molested as a rule. The stockmen claim the old birds kill young sheep and pigs, but the trappers and sportsmen consider them as friends, for when flying low over the marshlands, they keep the game moving, and many birds are brought to bag that otherwise would have escaped.

Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans.

THE GRAY KINGBIRD IN WAKULLA COUNTY, FLORIDA.

BY JOHN WILLIAMS.

These birds occur here along the shores of the Gulf in all congenial situations. They seem to be extremely particular as to a locality for nesting, and as such sites are not numerous within the limits of our county the birds cannot be called abundant summer residents.

They are to be found, for the greater part of their stay with us, where there are a few scattered trees—Live Oaks usually—contiguous to or at least but a short distance back from the open waters of the Gulf or on the shores of an extended bay. Broad salt-water marshes usually stretch along shore on either side of these home sites, in which abound Florida Clapper Rails (*Rallus crepitans scotti*),